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## WOMEN IN PALESTINE.

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WOMEN in Palestine are under somewhat similar social conditions as in Turkey and Egypt. Their Moslem conquerors have imposed upon them the veil, the seclusion, and many other limitations. The veil ordinarily worn is a colored print with embroidered edge, and a white robe envelops the rest of the figure. According to the social rank, silk robes, black, gray, purple, or crimson, with an ornamental border of gold thread, are also worn. Women contribute to the household service by drying fruit and grain upon the housetop, grinding corn, and bringing water. They carry the water in heavy jars, each weighing when full from fifty to seventy-five pounds. This they lift and poise upon the head in going from the spring, the river, or the distant well to the mud hovel which answers for a home. The mill used in grinding corn consists of upper and lower circular stones, between which the grain is placed; the upper, a large stone from two to three feet in diameter, is made to revolve upon the lower by pushing it around by an upright stick or handle inserted in a hole. Two women are seated on opposite sides of this mill, and alternately push and pull, thus reducing the corn to powder by the weight and motion of the upper stone. The labor must be as severe as heavy convict labor in civilized countries. Dr. Jessup is authority for stating that women are yoked with cattle and donkeys before the plow, and driven as are other beasts of burden by the sharp goad. I did not see this severe treatment in Palestine, but only in the so-called Christian countries of Europe.

Women formerly had no education except such as was provided for them by the mission schools. But so much has public sentiment been raised by these schools, especially in Syria, that

the Moslems have become aroused and have started their own schools by the side of the mission schools, ordering those of their religious faith to withdraw their children from the mission to their own school, and even enforcing their threats by taxation



WOMEN GRINDING

and persecution. The head of one mission school, a quaint, bright, Scotch woman, said she was glad they had taught the Moslems the value of educating their women. Her account of the conditions under which her school was started was full of interest, and illustrated the difficulty under which such work with an oriental people is begun. She has now a school of about one hundred boys and girls of the lower classes, Moslems and Druses. She teaches them in Arabic, elementary number, reading and writing, with sewing and embroidery for the girls. Her first school was very successful, and numbered nearly three hundred when the Moslems opened their noisy school under the windows, forcing her to move, and reducing her numbers by taking away all her day pupils.

The higher education of women is conducted in English and French in the Beirut Seminary, where about seventy students

were enrolled. On the day of our visit we heard recitations in natural history, French, psychology—to which the oriental mind takes naturally—and reading from English readers. The class in calisthenics was conducted on the lawn under



BEIRUT

the trees, and was a pretty sight, though the pupils were listless and nerveless in their movements. The principal said that it was very hard to get concerted action from the girls at first.

To show how such education is now valued by the Syrians, I quote from a Druse father who had sent his daughter to this seminary, and was asked to give his opinion in regard to woman's education. The letter is addressed to Dr. Jessup :

To my honored Sir, to whom ever overflow the tides of grace and favor :

I would inform you that in the most propitious of seasons and most lovely of the glorious ages the full moons of your honored writings sparkled over the flowery glades, and the sweet waters of your courteous language murmured through the

recesses of our heart, giving life to the dead by the delicacy of their hidden wisdom, and by all the kind inquiries you have condescended to lay before us as to what are our views in regard to the propriety and necessity of teaching women and girls that knowledge and those arts which are appropriate to them.

My honored sir, I would answer in the way of apology that I am not of the knights of this arena, and my great incapacity to handle such a subject must be apparent to your excellency and to all who know me. But your kind interest in me and my child has led you to impute to me a degree of knowledge in these matters which I do not really possess, and I can only understand it by recalling the lines of the poet :

The favoring eye of loving friends  
Our fault conceals, our name defends ;

and I would implore of Him most exalted never to deprive me of your exalted regard.

In obedience, then, to your request, I will venture to express my views in as far as I know anything about the subject. It is not only proper, but necessary, that girls should be taught those sciences and arts which are appropriate to them. We all know that it is the law and custom that girls marry men, and have thrown upon them the duty of training children. Now, children are brought up in the lap of the mother, and not of the father ; and if the mother has been educated, her children grow up acute of perception, intelligent and pure, and this for the reason that the son associates with his mother far more than with his father for the first ten years of his life. If the mother is enlightened, educated, and intelligent, her son will be the same. But, on the contrary, if the women are uninstructed in science and proper knowledge and useful arts, and know not the value of learning, their children will be like them. And supposing that a woman remains unmarried, still less can she afford to remain in ignorance, for she must depend for support upon her needle or her pen or some one of the useful trades and arts, and a proper education in these will make her independent for life. I might say more, but this is the extent of my knowledge, and those who are possessed of wisdom and knowledge on these themes can supply my deficiencies and convince all objectors and opposers.

. . . . .

Please make my highest regards to their excellencies, the most honored, the teachers of the seminary, and to all your family. My uncle, Ali Beg, the Kaim Makam, offers to you the

due salutations of reverence and honor, and hearty longing to behold the light of your countenance. This is all I need to write, with the hearty offer to do anything you command in this region, for your commands are my highest honor.

The petitioner to God for you,

HASSAN HAMADY.

This was from a prince or leading man of the Druses, and represents advanced oriental sentiment. Leave off its wordy complimentary phrases, which are only a form of oriental courtesy, and the Druse leader has clear elementary ideas on the education of woman, which are probably due to the value of the instruction given to his daughter in the seminary in Beirut.

Beirut is favorably situated on the curve of a beautiful bay, with the snowy peaks of the Lebanon mountain ranges in full view from the city. It is a great educational and missionary center. There are more schools, in proportion to its size, than in many cities in more civilized lands. The college is largely attended, and ambitious young Syrians look forward to it as the great goal of their education, and from it young men go out to teach and to preach.

Mr. and Mrs. Mott's British and Foreign Colonial School in this place has a large training school for women teachers. The young girls from fourteen to eighteen, with dark eyes and hair, rich brown complexion, and happy expression, were a pleasing sight. They were neatly dressed in simple pink calico dresses, all made by the wearers. Their singing was particularly good. The girls are induced to stay in school here and at the seminary for a longer time than in other parts of Palestine, as the missionary influence has been longer felt in this center, and the value of the intellectual training is more appreciated. The students read English well, and also Arabic, but have more difficulty with mathematics, and pay less attention to the subject. Classes for the blind evidently meet a great need, since they are remarkably large. This may be explained by the fact that the babies and young children have often sore eyes, and that there is a superstition about driving away the flies which settle upon them. We often wondered how children could live to mature age with

such diseased and neglected eyes. Perhaps they are taught patience in that severe way, but we found many men and women blind in one or both eyes, or suffering from ophthalmia. If the mothers could be taught the importance and duty of cleanliness

alone, it would work a great reform.



WOMEN WITH VEILS

After the terrible massacre of the Christians by the Druses, in 1860, many homeless orphans were left in the mountains, who were driven by hunger and a desire for protection into Beirut. The German deaconesses gave them food and shelter and started the orphanage now under their care. To get the funds necessary for their work, these women conduct a pay school for the children of English residents and missionaries, and thus make their finances balance.

The training in cleanliness alone—for their house is a model of neatness and order—is bringing the children nearer to godliness. But it was plain to see that further instruction was not wanting. The orphans were dull-looking children, and they proved their dullness in their recitation which we heard in arithmetic. The sister said that they did not care for arithmetic, and were much better at memorizing. Our respect for these deaconesses increased as we saw how difficult was their double self-imposed task, and how well

the helpless, under their direction, were trained in helping themselves.

In our pension in Beirut there was staying temporarily a niece of the poet Wordsworth, Mary Wordsworth Smith. She was a maiden lady, advanced in years, who had devoted the greater part of her life to the care of an invalid brother. On his death she was left with some property, and looking around to see where she could benefit humanity by her efforts for the rest of her life, her attention was called to the Druses inhabiting the Lebanon mountains. This narrow sect had massacred the Christians and had shown such murderous hatred to their innocent fellowmen that she longed to carry to them the tidings of peace and good will. She built a house in a Druse village on the Lebanon mountains, won the hearts of the villagers by



WOMEN WITH WATER JARS

giving them medicine and by the occasional visits of a doctor giving them a chance of medical advice, established a dispensary in charge of a trained nurse, then a school for boys and girls, and, finally, the Sunday school. She had been there some ten years, and was on friendly, and even cordial, relations with the entire village. Her school prospered, the dispensary was a well-appreciated part of the work, and the people came now to her Sunday



school; even the old Druse chief came to her to talk of religious matters. The dear old lady had grown blind and was in Beirut for treatment. Her face had the outline of her uncle, the poet, and her sweet expression and quiet composure testified to the inner beauty of a life that had so impressed her rough and murderous neighbors. The courage of such self-sacrificing devotion in renouncing the comforts of a civilized home for isolation among a hostile and treacherous people needs no comment and commands admiration.

In Bishop Gobat's school, in Jerusalem, in which many a young dragoman has his first lesson, a feature novel to the Orient is introduced in manual training. We were able to procure there models in clay of the water jar, and in wood of the winnowing fan, the goad, the oriental plow, and the yoke. From a recitation we judged that memorizing and strict discipline were characteristic of the school.

While halting for lunch between Khan el Minyeh and El Khalisa, we saw an approaching bridal cavalcade. The central figure of the procession was a mule, on which was a white canvas-covered frame, with an escort of three or four mounted Bedouins. We were told that within this moving tent was a bride on her way to the home of her future husband. Our dragoman informed us that the ladies of our party would be permitted to see her in return for a gift in silver. The caravan halted, and the canvas curtain was drawn slightly aside, enough to show the single observer the bride seated within. By her side was an elderly relative. The bride extended a slender hand, stained with henna on palm and finger nails; but not until she felt the weight of the franc piece did she draw aside her veil and show her black hair, dark eyes, and eyelids stained with kohl or antimony. She was dressed in white, with ornaments of gold coins, a necklace and a headdress. For a compensation in the form of backshish, our dragoman had no trouble in persuading the Bedouin escorts to leave the bride waiting while they showed their skill in a mock combat, in which spears were flourished, and fine horsemanship was displayed.

One interesting feature of the mission work for the education of women in Beirut is the women's class. The wife of a

professor in the theological seminary, who started the plan, took us to visit one of these classes. We crossed an old Moslem burying ground to reach the native house, the place of gathering. On the low benches, lining the room and filling the center, were sixty or seventy native women, representing all ages and grades of social standing, as was shown by their faces and garments. Just in front of me was a blear-eyed woman with red hair—a very unusual type. Back of her was seated a young girl, scarcely in her teens, with her baby; and still farther back a serious-eyed woman of middle age, with the tattoo-marks of slavery or superstition on her arm. A very handsome girl, with beautiful eyes, olive complexion, and regular features, sat in the rear; and as I looked at her she drew her white izzar partly over her face in a shy, coquettish way. The lowest grade of humanity was represented by another, and we wondered how life could hold anything of interest for such a blind and withered, distorted and misshapen creature as her. The teacher who conducted the service, a sweet-faced woman, was reading in Arabic the verse from the New Testament: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that all who believe in him might have eternal life." Most of the women listened, but some showed the



DRUSE BRIDE

fickleness of children in attention, turning in the midst of the reading to a neighbor with a remark, or speaking out directly if they felt inclined. An assistant said she was policeman while the teacher read, and they exchanged offices in turn. The two elements of reader and policeman were quite necessary. After the reading and explanation, the ladies and a native teacher heard a recitation and a verse from each, passing around among the benches. The roll was called, and some made this a signal to rise. We found afterward that a small piece of cloth, a few yards, was given each woman who answered to the roll-call during the year. A helper near the door gently seated one woman who attempted to go out in a chair at her side. At this defeat all the women laughed like children, and she, finding it useless to attempt to leave, went back to her bench. A shining black woman, with a sleeping baby in her arms, tried the same plan, but she, too, was restrained in the same way. We were told that, if one had been permitted to go, all others would have followed in a noisy manner. After roll-call the teacher made a brief prayer, and they were dismissed. In a conversation with the teacher, as we walked back over the Moslem burying ground, she said that sometimes a woman was so repulsive that she had found herself taking the opposite side of the room in a recitation to avoid her, and she knew that she must overcome the feeling to do her any good. Improvement and mutual attachment followed the changed attitude of the teacher.

What can be done to lift these women above these degraded conditions of living ; to save them from the dirt and ignorance and enslavement in which they exist ? No mere environment can reform. If the Turkish government were to change its policy and become less tyrannical, less corrupt, less grasping (I speak of it in these diminishing terms, because I believe that no positive good can be expected from a government with such fundamental religious and political principles), even then we have not gone back to the cause of woman's degradation in these eastern countries.

Dr. Jessup says : "Contempt for woman stamps every part of

eastern life, shapes the household talk of all classes, and lives from one generation to another in familiar proverbs."

The women of his household are to the master as his animals, his dog, or his donkey, and if he speaks of them he begins with the same exclamation—an appeal to Allah as an apology for introducing so mean a subject. The Arabs have a proverb: "The household weeps forty days when a girl is born." Women are despised, and the birth of a daughter is considered a calamity. A religion that sanctions such conditions of living as polygamy and slavery can have no higher ideal of woman. Woman is not only degraded and enslaved by such a substitution for home and the family life, but the entire social whole is demoralized and corrupted.



SYRIAN GIRL

In oriental countries woman is bought and sold, married early and divorced at the arbitrary wish of her lord and master. The story of Bluebeard and his power of life and death over his wives is paralleled in many eastern households. We saw the typical venerable murderer in Beirut, where his history was known. His gray hairs and flowing beard made him a stately picture as he walked in his garden in the cool of the day; but his imperious manner was evident to us, his near neighbors, who

overlooked the direction of his household from the balcony above. He had had three wives, and they, with a step-son, who stood between him and his last wife's property, had been mysteriously murdered, as it was understood, by his agency. He had been tried for murder each time, but Turkish justice, as is well known, is bought and sold, and he had the money of his wives. Divorces are so easily obtained that it adds another element of uncertainty in the life of woman.

Nineteen centuries have nearly gone since Christ taught that not might nor power, but spiritual force should prevail in the establishment of the kingdom of heaven; yet even now we are prone to measure men and women by the old standards. It is where the Christian spirit is recognized, where the standard that Christ raised is most closely followed, where his teachings are studied and practiced, that woman is elevated, that her recognition as having rights of property, of independence, of voluntary helpfulness, are growing into established facts.



WOMEN WITH FAGOTS